



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CITIES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

Introduction and presentations

Mauricio Valiente, Third Deputy Mayor of Madrid, welcomes the participants of the event. He pays tribute to human rights defender Carlos Slepoy, who died the day before. For several decades, Slepoy served as a lawyer for the victims of the Francoist, Argentine and Chilean dictatorships.

Patrick Braouezec, President of Plaine Commune, recalls that the origins of the [Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights](#) date back to the first editions of the Forum of Local Authorities for Social Inclusion and Participatory Democracy held in parallel to the World Social Forum since 2001. In 2005, the CSIPDHR was created within the framework of the recently born United Cities and Local Governments organization, as an institutional space to work on the areas of social inclusion and participatory democracy. In 2011, the Human Rights thematic axis was added to the Committee, with the UCLG adoption of the [Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City](#) at the UCLG World Council held in Florence. This serves as a framework for implementing the international rights agenda at the local level. The Committee supports the experience of local governments in these areas, carrying out advocacy and mobilizing work in the progressive realization of the Right to the City.

In the face of global threats, local strategies to guarantee human rights

Debate moderated by **Magali Fricaudet**, CSIPDHR coordinator, and **María Naredo**, Coordinator of the Strategic Plan for Human Rights in the city of Madrid

The debate opens with a review of the current situation of human rights in the world. According to Amnesty International's latest report, in recent years there has been a "global pushback against human rights" and the world order on which they are founded. We are witnessing the emergence of xenophobic policies that jeopardize harmonious coexistence and public freedoms, in particular, the freedom to defend rights. At the same time, the budget cuts suffered by town councils restrict their ability to meet the needs of their populations.

Daniel Martínez, Mayor of Montevideo and President of the Latin American and Caribbean Coalition of Cities against Racism, Discrimination and Xenophobia and a member of the UNESCO ICCAR Network, argues that the city's rights agenda must be present and transversal in all municipal actions. He mentions areas in which this is happening in Montevideo: initiatives in favor of equal marriage and gender equality, against racial discrimination, as well as [the SACUDE program](#), which promotes initiatives in the fields of health, culture and sports.

Mayor Martínez points out that in Latin America neoliberal policies were followed, which seriously affected the quality of life of people and their access to rights.

Next, the Mayor highlights the importance of citizen empowerment and that people take ownership of these agendas. The role of democratic institutions is key but also that citizens actively defend their rights and participate in public debates. In Montevideo, the city supports inhabitants organizing on a neighborhood level and promotes a training program for defenders of rights.

Pam McConnell, Executive Secretary at the city council of Toronto, states that cities, due to their proximity with their citizens, share a common journey in the defense and guarantee of human rights. In Toronto, the fourth largest city in North America and a multicultural city, the municipal team has established a 20-year poverty reduction strategy. Pam McConnell insists on the fact that as local governments, we must facilitate the inhabitants' ability to care for each other and work together with civil society.

In 2005, the municipal team began working to protect the rights of undocumented workers. The campaign [*Don't ask, don't tell*](#) began, which aimed at reducing the fear of migrants of being deported when it came to asserting their rights and relating to the municipal government. This campaign led Toronto to become a Sanctuary City, thus allowing migrants to safely access municipal services and assert their rights. In this context, civil servants were trained to respect confidentiality and not to ask certain questions to undocumented persons. One of the biggest challenges was working with municipal police services. Toronto also implemented policies to welcome migrants and raise awareness in schools. In 2014, Toronto again affirmed itself as city for all, a sanctuary city.

In Toronto, as in all cities, there are strong economic and opportunity inequalities, compounded by growing xenophobia and islamophobia. The most excluded people - among others - are the homeless, transgender and indigenous people. With respect to indigenous people, Toronto implements the [national truth and reconciliation policy](#), based on local work regarding diversity and memory. Toronto sees as priorities areas such as education, housing and support for women. Women experience particularly vulnerable situations, both in the area of maternal and child health and in situations of violence and trafficking in women.

McConnell insists that no person is illegal. In these arduous years, sharing the messages and practices of cities that promote rights is very important. In this respect, she highlights the solidarity expressed by Canadian cities such as Toronto with US cities that reject federal directives on immigration to ensure access to rights without exclusion.

Rosario Ortiz, as Executive Secretary of the [Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism for Mexico City's Human Rights Program](#), begins her speech recalling the difficult situation of human rights in Mexico, where rights defenders and journalists are seriously threatened. Ortiz mentions [the constitutional process that took place in Mexico City](#), which has given the city more power and a new system that establishes access to human rights and the right to the city.

However, she underlines the efforts of other levels of government who wish to limit the scope of this constitution.

In 1997, Mexico City became an autonomous state. Thanks to the political will of the government at that time, the incorporation of a human rights approach in the three branches of power (legislative, judicial and governmental) was guaranteed. In addition, the involvement of academia and civil society has been fundamental in the process of enforcing rights.

This enforceability is a key methodological element in the conception of public policies. Enforceability is an ongoing process, deeply intertwined with the citizenry's awareness and empowerment in realizing that they are the subjects of rights and that they can demand them from their local administration. In addition, collaboration with civil society and the creation of mechanisms for citizen participation are two key elements in the context of Mexico City. In order to favor the participation of civil society, they are given support, for example, in the methodological aspects of carrying out a diagnosis at the local level. In terms of participation, the multicultural dimension is substantially taken into account.

On the other hand, Mexico City's human rights strategy incorporates the rights approach into public policies and includes human rights training and active dialogues with public servants and civil society. Mexico City governs from a human security perspective, with a view to eradicate discrimination with a special emphasis on gender, migrant and socio-spatial discrimination. The concretization of the rights approach, which was crystallized in the constitutional text, can be seen in many areas: the legalization of abortion, same-sex marriage, working against gender-based violence, taking the initiative to generate safer cities for women, as well as providing responses and access to rights for migrants (internal and external).

Finally, Ortiz highlights two key elements to guarantee human rights at the local level: political will and the allocation of resources.

Mauricio Valiente, Third Deputy of the Mayor of Madrid, Delegate for Human Rights and Historical Memory, introduces [the Plan for Human Rights in the city](#) of Madrid, adopted on February 16, 2017, born of the will to promote, guarantee and defend human rights at the local public policy level.

The human rights plan aims at adapting local public policies to international human rights standards, turning the inhabitants of Madrid into real subjects of rights. The plan was approved following a participatory process with [digital and face-to-face mechanisms](#) open to residents and organizations. Likewise, researchers and professors of the universities of Madrid collaborated to complement the technical development of the Plan. The objective was to take advantage of the mechanisms and mobilization generated in order to understand what the shortcomings in human rights at the local level were and what priorities could be set for correcting them with the new Plan. In accordance, an Office of Human Rights and Historical Memory has been set in motion, which has the task of promoting and coordinating the actions of this plan as a whole. At the end of each fiscal year, the municipal budget must present human

rights impact reports in order to demonstrate the degree of integration of a human-rights approach in their operational programs.

Mauricio Valiente emphasizes that this plan can only advance with municipal autonomy since local public policies are the closest to citizens. Plans such as this are part of the fight against current tendencies that limit the ability of the public to act in the public interest and which presents a serious threat to the safeguarding of rights.

Discussion with the participants

Marc Serra, advisor to Jaume Asens, 4th Deputy Mayor of Barcelona in charge of Citizen Rights, Participation and Interculturality, intervenes to highlight how the Spanish Aliens Act limits cities' ability to include migrants. He points to the case of Toronto since it seemed interesting to him that they could ensure access to the rights of the migrant population regardless of their administrative status. In the Spanish state, the problem lies in legal bodies such as the Aliens Act, which establishes irregularity and includes a deportation policy. This impedes the ability of local governments in Spain to ensure migrants' access to rights. In Barcelona, everyone can register as a resident, but nonetheless, national legislation hinders local policies from including migrants. For this reason, a plan was launched in Barcelona to encourage migrants to register without the risk of denunciations in order to be able to better detect their situation and improve their social inclusion.

Serra shares several initiatives promoted by Barcelona to develop an effective rights approach. Firstly, he mentions the [Barcelona Ciutat de Drets](#) (Barcelona, City of Rights) government measure, based on local actions for the promotion and safeguarding of citizen rights, which seeks to include the rights approach in the field of municipal public policies. The city has also promoted a [Municipal Plan to combat Islamophobia](#), with the aim of informing and sensitizing the population regarding this phenomenon as well as guaranteeing the rights of its victims. Similarly, there are spaces such as the [Anti-Rumors Strategy](#), which is dedicated to deconstructing prejudice about migrants in the city.

Josep Sagarra, of the Catalan Fund for Cooperation and Development, who coordinates a working group on migration at UCLG, congratulates the Executive Secretary of the City of Toronto for their work as a sanctuary city. He emphasizes the need to work in networks at the municipal level in order to strengthen these initiatives and also to work in cooperation with cities from which migrants depart. Sagarra also recalls [the situation of the mayor of Diyarbakir](#), city that is a member of this Committee and of UCLG, Gültan Kışanak, in prison with Co-mayor Fırat Anlı, after being accused of supporting the PKK, considered a terrorist organization by the Turkish state. He insists on the need for our networks to report violations of local democracy in Turkey and in the rest of the world.

Magali Fricaudet, of the Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights, recalls that the Committee [issued a communiqué](#) denouncing the arrest of the Mayor of Diyarbakir and denouncing the situation of local democracy in Turkey. Several members wrote to

their foreign ministers or Turkish consulates in their cities to communicate their concern. A mission by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has been carried out and follow-up work is being coordinated from the European section of UCLG, the CEMR.

Cuca Hernández, from [ATTAC Spain](#), presents the ATTAC campaign with the United Nations to demand that multinational companies respect human rights. She invites local governments to submit motions to support this campaign in their plenary sessions.

Magali Fricaudet, from the CSIPDHR, notes the relationship of this initiative with the policy [Tax Haven Free Zones](#), promoted by the [Platform for Fair Taxation, Environmental Solidarity](#) and [Oxfam Intermón](#), which seeks to introduce criteria of social and environmental responsibility in local government procurement, with the specific objective of combating tax evasion and tax avoidance by large companies. The Committee is currently considering the possibility of collaborating with this project in order to bring it to more local governments around the world.

Julián Rebollo, of the [Forum for Historical Memory](#), points out that Madrid's Strategic Plan for Human Rights provides measures to work on the memory of the crimes committed during Franco's regime, putting into effect the [Law of Historical Memory](#). He denounces the impunity given to numerous officials of the regime and the non-reparation of the victims.

Kim SOO A, of the Metropolitan Government of Gwangju, notes that this city of South Korea, co-chair of the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights, was the seat of the uprising against the military regime in 1980 and that thousands of people died during this event. Since then, Gwangju has been actively striving to be a city for human rights, organizing each year a [World Forum of Cities for Human Rights](#) in collaboration with the CSIPDHR.

Antonio Aniesa, from Plaine Commune, in the Paris metropolis, emphasizes the importance of working on the human rights approach from the specificities of metropolitan areas. He also points to the need to consider socio-spatial segregation in local policies on inclusion and rights in an effort towards the constitution of polycentric cities.

Ary Vanazzi, Mayor of São Leopoldo, on the outskirts of Porto Alegre, denounces the situation of "coup d'état" that Brazil is suffering. According to researchers, the human rights situation in Brazil has fallen back to the level it was in the 1880s. In Sao Leopoldo, work is being done on access to housing in a context of strong migration as well as new methods of popular participation.

Enrique Villalobos, of the Federation of Neighborhood Associations of Madrid, shares his experience in the field of the Right to Housing, a struggle to ensure decent housing for everyone without exclusion and as a right, not a commodity. He mentions the crucial importance of neighborhood and citizen solidarity and activism, and how this struggle has been linked to

specific causes, such as the anti-eviction activism of the [Platform of People Affected by Mortgages](#).

Magali Fricaudet, CSIPDHR coordinator presents [the "Shift" Campaign](#) launched at the Habitat III summit in Quito, with United Nations Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Leilani Farha and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. This campaign promotes the right to housing instead of its commodification. In the coming months, actions will be proposed together with civil society to promote this campaign and the role that local governments can play to guarantee the right to housing.

Mechanisms for Realizing the Right to the City and Presentation of the Committee on Social Inclusion, Participative Democracy and Human Rights

Results achieved in 2016

Patrick Braouezec, President of Plaine Commune and Co-Chair of the CSIPD, shared the work done last year by the Committee, with particular reference to the process of defining the *New Urban Agenda*, within the framework of the Habitat III Summit on Sustainable Urban Development. The Committee's networking with local governments and members of civil society through the [Global Platform for the Right to the City](#) was key to the final inclusion of the Right to the City in the text of the NUA. In the following years, it will be a question of working effectively so that these efforts do not merely remain on paper and are transformed into concrete actions.

Kim Soo A, Human Rights Director of the Metropolitan Government of Gwangju, presents the actions of her local government in the field of human rights. She makes special mention of the [World Forum of Cities for Human Rights](#), which the Gwangju metropolitan city co-organized with the Committee. As an homage to its historical memory, her city opted for a network of local governments that defend human rights through their participation in the CSIPDHR with the aim of protecting, helping and learning. The next edition of the Forum will take place from September 14 to 17, 2017, and will focus on the area of citizen participation and practical experiences that make it concrete. Kim SOO A invites everyone present to participate.

Bernardo Gutiérrez is a journalist and activist at [MediaLab Prado](#). In 2016, he collaborated with UCLG and CSIPDHR in the Bogota Congress, co-organizing with the Committee the workshop "[Co-creating the City](#)." In order to visualize citizen practices and connect them with local governments and other activists, social networks and other digital media were used to provide content for the Bogota workshop, where representatives of different organizations concretized the different axes of the right to the city. Specifically, work was done on the right to a sustainable, lively city (based on neighborhood connections and human networks), conducive to learning (teaching, exchange and free access to knowledge), democratic (processes of participation and in favor of common goods), diverse (responsible and collective management of common and cultural goods) and fair (in issues such as gender, equity or combating socio-

spatial segregation). Currently, work is being done to disseminate and evaluate the results of this workshop.

Axes for Action in 2017

Aurore Brachet, Head of the International Cooperation and Global Citizenship Service of the Seine-Saint-Denis Departmental Council, who co-chairs the Committee, calls attention to the fact that the department of Seine-Saint-Denis, the youngest and poorest in France, is in charge of social inclusion policies. Brachet raises the difficulty of safeguarding rights in the context of budget cuts and austerity. To this end, the Department wishes to focus its work with the Committee to deal more specifically with its territorial reality, while at the same time connecting to other cities with similar situations. It seeks to work primarily on three areas: 1) youth, carrying out concrete projects in the area of participation, socio-labor insertion and mobility; 2) migration, in order to improve the degree of participation and mutual knowledge, as well as to value the cultural diversity that the city treasures; 3) a social and solidarity economy, valuing proximity and responsibility in production and consumption.

Marc Serra, advisor to Jaume Asens, 4th Deputy Mayor of Barcelona in charge of Citizenship, Participation and Intercultural Rights, announces the main axes of the municipal measure [*Barcelona City of Rights*](#). One of the actions promoted under this measure is a Training Plan for public workers (in various areas such as Human Rights and religious diversity) that in 2017 has been focusing on workers in citizen's services offices, the local police and Social Services. Actions such as the [*Plan against Islamophobia*](#) or the [*Anti-Rumors Strategy*](#) complete this measure. Barcelona has initiated several initiatives with the Committee, although in the coming months the most visible work will be around the adoption of the [*Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City*](#). Work will also be done organizing a meeting in 2018 to celebrate the 20-year process that began in Barcelona in 1998 during the European Mayors meeting and led to the adoption of the [*European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City*](#).